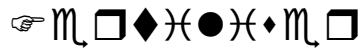


Gardening tips!

by Raewyn Stinson



- ❖ Mulching means less work for the gardener!
- ❖ Mulch prevents weeds.
- ❖ Mulch keeps the soil moist and saves watering.
- ❖ It improves and feeds the soil by adding organic matter.
- ❖ Use lawn clippings, fallen leaves (not eucalyptus), bales of hay, plant prunings, compost, horse or cow manure.



- ❖ vegetables need to be fed while growing to make them tasty and nutritious. There are different ways you can feed your garden.
- ❖ You can buy fertilisers such as dynamic lifter or organic life (you'll usually get the best deals at produce shops).
- ❖ You can get free horse manure from the stables at the race course between 9am-3pm (just some bin bags full is enough for a few veggies). Don't forget to take a shovel! It's usually best to get horse manure in winter when there's no flies! Horse manure can be dug directly into garden soil or left in a pile to compost for a while.

❖ Chook and pigeon manure is one of the best fertilisers. If you know anyone with chooks or pigeons, you could ask to help clean out their bird pen in return for a few bags! Tomatoes can handle a straight application of chook manure, but other veggies will prefer it if it's composted for a while first, or added to soil a few weeks before planting into.

❖ Make your own liquid fertiliser: pile weeds (e.g. thistles, dock, nettle, etc) into a container that you can put a cover on. Cover with water and put the lid on. Just let it all rot down. This will take at least a few weeks. It's ready to start using when it really stinks! To use it, dilute it with water in a watering can so that it looks kind of like weak tea (about 1 part liquid fertiliser to 10 parts water). Water your plants with this about every 1-2 weeks.

❖ Don't plant under eucalyptus trees. Veggies don't like the oils from their leaves at all!



❖ Healthy soil means healthy plants and less pest and disease! Adding some gravel or sand to the soil will increase silica and other minerals, which makes plants stronger. You can ask for small amounts (by the bucket for a few dollars) from sand and gravel suppliers (crusher dust and river sand are among the best for this). You don't need much, and you only need to do it about once every 5 years. This will also make your veggies extra nutritious!

❖ Garden pests find the plants they like to feed on by smell and looking for particular leaf shapes. Neat rows of one type of veggie makes it really easy for pests to find!

❖ Mix up your veggie plantings and don't worry about rows. This mixes up the plants' scents and shapes, and confuses bugs.

❖ Plant herbs and flowers among veggies to confuse pests some more (plus it looks great!). Plants like nasturtiums are excellent to have trailing among veggies because they confuse pests with both smell and shape, and they make the garden look pretty

(plus you can eat the leaves and flowers in salads and sandwiches – they're sweet and peppery, high in vitamin C, and have antiviral properties!)

- ❖ Plant veggies among shrubs in already established garden beds.

- ❖ If you get a pest outbreak that you just can't seem to get under control – don't be disheartened. The pest's predator will also start to build up (good reason not to use chemical insecticides), so if you try again next season you probably won't have the same problem.

- ❖ There are many good garden insects whose larvae help control the pests that eat your veggies. Some good bugs are dragonflies, lace wings, most ladybirds, garden spiders, and wasps. Flowers attract these good bugs.

- ❖ Lizards eat snails and slugs. You can encourage them to live among your veggies by putting piles of rocks around for them and having small dishes of water (or other water sources).

- ❖ Little birds (e.g. wrens, fly catchers) will also eat some of your pests (apparently they eat hundreds per day). If you don't have cats, leave dishes of water for bird baths. Pot plant saucers work really well for this, and birds really enjoy them in summer.

- ❖ If your veggies get lots of tiny insects on them (usually aphids, thrips or mites), simply melt some soap in water (add chilli powder or garlic for real potency!), let it cool, and pour in a spray bottle. Spray bugs in the cool part of the day (early morning or late afternoon) so leaves won't burn. This will also work for caterpillars if you put plenty of garlic and/or chilli in the brew.

- ❖ For snail and slug outbreaks there are safe snail pellets that won't harm kids, pets, lizards, frogs or birds (like other snail pellets will). The brand is called 'Multiguard', and is approved for certified organic growers. You can get it in the gardening sections

of most supermarkets, hypermarkets, hardwares and garden centres (e.g. Coles, Big W, Bunnings).

- ❖ If it's a really rainy or humid summer, your cucumbers and other cucurbits (pumpkins, melons, etc) may get mildew. This looks like white powdery stuff on the leaves, and it will eventually kill the plant. Simply mix 1 part full cream milk to 9 parts water, and use in a spray bottle. Spray it as soon as you see mildew, and then every week until it's gone. There is also a yellow ladybird with a black stripe that eats mildew, and will build up in gardens where cucurbits are often grown, and eventually naturally keep mildew controlled. Also make sure there is plenty of room for air to circulate around cucurbit plants, and this will prevent mildew.
- ❖ If you do get some weird disease on your plants, make sure you plant the next lot of the same type of veggie in a different spot. In fact, it's good gardening practice to never plant the same veggie in the same spot twice in row. This will stop pests and diseases from building up.

Good Luck & Happy
Gardening!